THE MOON-MAIDEN

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FRANCES REED GIBSON

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The Moon-Maiden

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

FRANCES REED GIBSON

BOSTON
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY
1913

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To

My Mother

who in my earliest childhood opened wide for me the enchanted gates of Imagination and Fancy, and instilled in my heart a "delyte in minstrelsie," attuning my childish ears to the heavenly harmonies of the divine art of Poetry,

and to

My Husband

who has ever held my hand with sympathetic clasp whenever we have wandered together through the "Summerland of Song."

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THE MOON-MAIDEN

A FANTASY

When the wild west winds have chased
from the sky
The guardian clouds of fleecy white,
The Moon-Maiden slips from her home on
high
Down a trembling ladder of radiant light
Unto the waiting world below;
And, as with noiseless tread she wanders
Through garden-close and flower-lined al-
ley,
Those who have rightly tuned their ear
May hear her sweet voice ringing clear,
Sweet and clear and musically; —
Singing, ringing, calling, calling,
Above the fountain's silver falling,
"Come follow, follow,
Into the moonlit fairy hollow!"

And the fairy folk who have slept all day
In the lily's white cup and the hyacinth-
bell,
Who have hid from the heat of the noon-
tide hour
'Mid the languorous leaves of the poppy
flower,
And shrunk from the hot blast's blighting
breath

The hollyhock's sheltering shade beneath,
From blossom and bud and leaf as well
Gaily throng each garden alley,
When in the midsummer night they hear
Those beck'ning accents ringing clear,
Sweet and clear and musically —
Singing, ringing, calling, calling,
Above the fountain's silver falling.
And fast they follow
Into the moonlit fairy hollow,

Where in robes of rainbow sheen
Titania sits on her throne in state;
And guarding her well from evil spell
Her loving courtiers near her wait,
Though Oberon stands aloof, with gaze
Askance on the fairy court, the while
Puck whispers to him, wearing a smile
Half of sport and half of malice,
Leaning out of the glistening chalice
Of a yellow lily that lights with a gleam
Of gold the shore of the murmuring stream
That sings itself most rhythmically
In and out of the fairy valley.

From the wimpling wave to the moss-
draped rocks
A naiad creeps with dripping locks,
And a dryad steals from the old oak tree
To gaze on the fairy revelry.

Drops of rippling melody
From over the distant hills are borne,
Distinct and sweet and thin and clear
Like the farewell note of an echoing horn
Or the first faint tinkling tones of a lute;
Fuller and fuller, clearer and clearer,
Slowly swelling, nearer and nearer,
They float, till bursts on the ravished ear
The magic strains of Pan's oaten flute.

No longer the eager elfin throng
Can brook delay of their promised pleasure.
Madly, with shout and joyous song,
The fairy feet stamp out each measure;
Now bounding high, now bending low,
Blithely they circle to and fro,
Round and round and in and out
While the Moon-Maiden leads the fairy rout,
And fleet as the flight of the skimming swallow
Speed the hours in the fairy hollow.

Oh, many an hour of mortal joy
'Tis worth this fairy fête to see,
But only to those is it given to look
On such scenes of elfin gayety
Who, through the years, have kept undimmed
The faiths of childhood, sweet and dear,

And still, in the song of the forest brook,
A naiad's whispering voice can hear;
Who, threading the boskage at early
dawn
When subtly stirs the hazel bough
With heavy fruitage bending low,
Can see the pointed ears of a faun
Silently stealing the thicket through;
Or, slowly walking a winding way,
When athwart an old oak tree
Falls the sun's last slanting ray,
Can glimpse an oread wrapped in gray,
Dimly flitting to and fro
Amid the twilight mystery
Of vine and moss and mistletoe.

To such as these is given the sight,
In the garden-close on a midsummer night,
Of the Moon-Maiden roaming each flower-
lined alley;
And unto these only is given to hear
(If they have rightly tuned their ear)
Her silver accents ringing clear,
Sweet and clear and musically,
Singing, ringing, calling, calling,
Above the fountain's fitful falling,
And *they* may follow
Into the moonlit fairy hollow.

A SWEET VAGRANT

The author of "Old English Gardens" records that "Bouncing Bet," a sweet garden-escape, bearing pale pink flowers with a faint delicious fragrance, that is found blooming in shy beauty upon old country roads in the United States, was once a cherished plant in the English gardens of long ago.

Brightening this lonely hill-side road, far from
the city's fevered fret,
You bloom beside a lichened wall, sweet, vagrant
Bouncing Bet!

And from your lips of sea-shell tint there comes
a fragrant sigh to me,
Like some faint odor from the past. With
subtle witchery,

It bears me backward through the years, into
dim days of old romance
When gallant lords, for ladies fair, wielded a
knightly lance.

I see the garden quaint and prim, where long
years since you bloomed beside
Tall, nodding lilies, saintly white, that were the
gardener's pride.

There myrtle vines about your feet in blue-
starred nettings softly crept,
And fox-gloves swung their purple bells to wake
you when you slept.

Musk roses wove a crimson bower; and scarlet
poppies climbed to see
Your pink cheeks flush when wooing came the
golden-crested bee.

Pale asphodel and columbine, sweet lavender and
mignonette,
Your comrades were in that far time, poor,
wandering Bouncing Bet!

Why did you leave those dear delights, the lark's
sweet call at early morn,
And, echoing down far mountain heights, the
distant bugle horn;

The fountain plashing in the night, the silver
note of flageolet
And violin, as stately dames trod a slow minuet?

Was it some elfish prank you played that ban-
ished you from that loved spot?
A secret to the winds betrayed of the forget-me-
not?

A prying of too curious eyes on loitering lovers
as they paced
Through cool, dim aisles, where overhead the
green boughs interlaced?

Or did you, of your own sweet will, fare forth,
filled with a wild unrest,
Wearied of cloistered happiness, searching with
childish zest,

For that dim forest old and hoar, of which the
wandering bee had sung
When to your honey-laden lips in ecstasy he
clung,

Seeking in vain the secret dells where fairies
dance the night away
And sleep in swinging blue hare-bells through-
out the summer day,

Till lost amid the world's wide ways, wearied
and heart-sick, sore afraid,
Beneath this elm tree's drooping boughs your
tired steps were stayed?

I hear no murmur from your lips, you do not
answer when I speak,
And yet methinks a happy smile flushes your
pale pink cheek,

Because you know, dear, tender flower, your
fragrant blooms with magic art
Unto a restful vision-land hath borne a tired
heart.

A LITTLE GHOST

When maple trees flaunt ruddy blooms,
And 'mid their boughs blithe robins sing,
When willow-catkins fringe the brooks
Through daisied meadows murmuring,
And from dim, grassy, sheltered nooks
Shy violets peep with startled looks,
From some forgotten yesterday
A little ghost steals up this way.

From under wind-blown locks, her eyes
Are wells of deep and pure delight,
As unto her entrancéd sight
Unfold Spring's budding mysteries.
She clasps within her eager hold
Spring's richest treasures manifold;

Pink apple buds that vainly seek
To match the blushes on her cheek;
Wild-cherry blooms of driven snow,
No whiter than her childish brow;
And with such rapture she looks down
On violets pressed against her breast,
A purple shadow seems to rest
Within her shining eyes of brown.

She trails a bough of dog-wood bloom,
A wild bee follows after,
While blue-birds lend their liquid notes
Unto her silver laughter:

Unnumbered wild flowers spring to meet
The coming of her childish feet,
And as she dances on her way
  She casts a wistful glance at me;
With pleading eyes, she seems to say,
  " Oh, weary one, come back and be
A child again, and with me play
In my fair land of Yesterday! "

Oh, little ghost with pleading eyes,
  I may not pass the flaming sword
That guardeth my lost Paradise,
  But in some glorious afterward,
Within some fairer clime, may I
  Regain that Heavenly ecstasy
Of trusting faith and rapturous joy
That once my happy childhood knew
When you were me and I was you.

A NAMELESS MELODY

Through dim recesses of my brain
A haunting tune glides to and fro,
But when my eager lips would fain
Give to the world its rhythmic flow,
The elusive notes far from me glide
In memory's secret haunts to hide.

I know not where, in long-past days,
The mystic measure charmed mine ear,
But with it linked are tender thoughts
Of many a happy bygone year,
When love was young and hope was bright,
And youth's sky glowed with rainbow light.

When weary hours of midnight pain
We brave alone, my heart and I,
From some far realm of song it floats,
This sweet, soul-soothing melody,
And with its silver notes once more
Throng hallowed memories of yore.

A sister's kiss, a brother's smile,
A father's true and fond caress,
A mother's gaze that holds for me
A wealth of loving tenderness,
Are mine again, brought back to me
By this sweet wraith of minstrelsy.

Oh, sweet and wondrous power of song,
That thus the phantom of a tune
Can bridge the gulf of years and make
Life's dull December glow like June,
Before whose sunshine disappear
The blighting clouds of doubt and fear.

A butterfly's most gorgeous hues
Will fade when crushed by childish clasp,
And so, sweet sprite of song, I strive
No more thy far, vague notes to grasp,
Lest with the touch of human lips
The magic sweetness from them slips,
And it returns no more to bless
My weary, waiting loneliness.

A JUNE ENCHANTMENT

"There's nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream."

A MAGICAL song sings elfin June,
Roaming at eve the forest aisles,
Stealing the nightingale's tender tune,
Warily weaving, with wizard wiles,
Fairy webs of silver light
To snare the souls of love-vexed swains
Till they yield to the charm of the summer night
And the lingering notes of her mystic strains.

Lured by the breath of an odorous sigh
From the swaying branch of a briar-rose
That she waves in her hand as she wanders by,
With pink leaves marking the way that she goes,
They follow with unresisting feet
Into a far, enchanted land,
Where a musical voice rings clear and sweet
And warm is the clasp of a well-loved hand.

Where, 'neath skies that are lit with a heavenly glow,
Dear eyes (the sweetest they ever knew)
Look back the love their fond eyes show,
Where lovers are constant and friends are true,

Where wealth comes quickly at love's behest,
And never omens of sorrow cloud
The hopes that spring in the youthful breast
(For all unseen is the misty shroud
The future is weaving for love's bright dream),
And their fond vows, whispered o'er and o'er,
Freight shallops to float down memory's stream
As it softly flows by that fairy shore.

Oh! June, dear June, these were blest indeed,
If, like the children of Hamelin town,
Following still where your sweet notes lead,
They never returned for the world's cold frown
To chill the warmth of their fresh, young hearts.
But all too soon the enchantment fades,
The roses wither, the spell departs,
As the far notes faint 'mid the gathering shades;

And never that sweet, bewildering strain
Shall entrance their ears, or their longing eyes
Beam in that heavenly glow again,
This side the portals of Paradise.
And when chillingly fall life's winter snows,
They will longingly dream of a vanished June,
And wearily sigh for the scent of the rose
And the far, faint sound of that mystic tune.

A PURPLE MONTH

Oh, May's the month of snowy bloom,
And June of silver moonlight.
July and August poppies throw
O'er gardens old a crimson glow.
September's amber noonlight
Sleeps, when the lengthening shadows play
In rocky pastures far away,
Cradled in wreaths of golden-rod
That softly sway and gently nod
In measure to the faint sheep-bells
That tinkle down the stony dells.

But when October, dewy-eyed,
Like some pure, pensive maiden,
Glides o'er the hills of amethyst
Wrapped in a veil of silver mist —
No fairer thing was e'er, I wis,
Wooed by the late year's lingering kiss
Or fanned by winds leaf-laden.
O'er wild grapes in the forest glade
She softly throws a purple shade;
While feathery asters, far and wide,
On sunny slope of mountain side,
From dusky dell and beetling crag
Fling forth her Tyrian-tinted flag.

All day, on valley, hill and stream,
  Her tender smile is resting;
A Sabbath peace broods over all,
And softly, at the wind's low call
To weave the grasses' funeral pall,
All silently the brown leaves fall.
But sorrowing hearts forget their grief
For fading field and falling leaf
  What time the sun is breasting
The night's dark wave with pennant red,
And slowly, o'er the west is spread,
A quivering amaranthine haze
That melts to violet 'neath the gaze
And dimly veils, to Faith's fond eyes,
  The jasper walls of Paradise.

THE TRYST

With priestly prayer they had laid her to rest
(Her still hands folded across her breast)
Beneath yew-trees old and gray.
And the bridegroom a lonely vigil kept
With sob and with tear, for the bride who slept
In the churchyard far away.

Without, the snows fell thick and fast,
But he heeded not the moaning blast
That tore at the lattice-bar,
For his soul still heard a muffled bell
Tolling, tolling a funeral knell,
Echoing near and far.

On that last sad night, when she lay on her bier,
(Tapers burning at foot and at head)
"Not even death can part us, dear,"
Bending low, in her ear he said,
"You *will* come back to me from the dead;
I shall watch and wait for you here."

So between the dying of the night
And the dawning of the day,
Over a path of pale moonlight
That on the dusk floor lay,
Softly unto his side she stole,
And murmured in his ear
The old, familiar, loving words —
How *could* he fail to hear?

But when on his brow her hand she laid,
He shivered and only said,
" Chill comes the air through the parted sash ";
And with weary turn of the head,
When she whispered her pleading words of love,
He murmured, 'mid falling tears,
" The wind sobs tonight like a grievéd child "—
So dull are human ears.

But the faithful hound, crouching low by his side,
She had loved in the days agone,
As the moonlight faded from off the floor,
Arose with a long, low moan,
And with one swift bound to the lattice-sill,
Gazed, with a wistful eye,
At a white snow wraith that a swirling wind
Was swiftly hurrying by,
As a lone cock crew, and the gray dawn broke
Afar in the eastern sky.

"ONE FLEW EAST AND ONE FLEW WEST AND ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST"

They sit 'neath the shade of the beechen tree
Three little maidens fair to see —
Alice and Belle and Marjorie.

Alice, with eyes of heaven's own blue;
Belle, with tresses of sunset hue;
While Marjorie's white soul shineth through

Luminous, tender, soft brown eyes
That seem to waken in grave surprise
From a dream of heavenly melodies.

She brings my lost youth back again
As her sweet lips murmur a simple strain
Of an olden game the slow refrain.

She utters each word with a childish zest,
"One-flew-east-and one-flew-west-
And-one-flew-over-the-cuckoo's-nest."

And as she counts the fingers small
On her lap outspread, with grave looks, all
Watch where the fateful word will fall.

So happy are they in their childish glee,
They heed not that, softly and silently,
I steal to the shade of the beechen tree.

The robin alone, in the branches high,
Notes my tread with a wary eye,
And trills to his mate a warning cry.

The western skies grow all aflame,
But still, the sweet lips murmur the same
Slow words of the old, familiar game.

And as they are borne to my listening ears,
I brush away the mist of tears
That curtains the vista of vanished years.

I see not Alice, blue-eyed and fair,
Nor Baby Belle's soft golden hair,
Nor Marjorie with her saintly air.

For I look, with introverted gaze,
Down the sunny slopes and flow'ry ways
My small feet trod in childhood's days.

Instead of the spreading beech, I see
A friendly, gnarled old cherry tree,
On whose bended trunk sit lovingly

Three little sisters, blithe and gay,
Who while the summer hours away
With the lingering words of a childish play.

And a voice that has long been hushed to rest
Chants " One-flew-east-and one-flew-west-
And-one-flew-over-the-cuckoo's-nest."

I can feel the vagrant winds that blow
The drooping branches to and fro,
And breathe the breath of the fragrant snow

Of blossoms, whose beauty fair and fleet
Falls in a white drift at my feet,
While overhead I hear the sweet,

Wild notes of the bluebird, flitting by
Like a bit of feathery azure sky
Floating down to show us heaven is nigh.

Too long I dream — when again mine eyes
Turn outward, dull are the western skies,
And all the valley in shadow lies.

I look in vain for the children three
Who sat 'neath the shade of the beechen tree,
Piping their childish melody.

For blue-eyed Alice, and Baby Belle,
And saintly Marjorie as well,
Have hied away from the darkening dell

To the dear home-nest, whose beckoning light
Drives away the vague affright
That comes with the gathering shades of night.

And the sweet small maidens who sate at play
'Neath the cherry-tree blooms that fair June
day
So long ago — ah, where are they?

Oh, one, with a steadfast heart and brave,
Fulfills the promise her sweet youth gave
Of a noble life, where Atlantic's wave

Against the shores of her Eastern home
Dashes its billows of angry foam,
And far from its thundering surges roam

The feet of one, where full and free
The fair, swift-flowing Tennessee
To the golden West glides joyfully.

And one — oh, purest and loveliest,
Flew long ago to a home of rest,
Far, far beyond the cuckoo's nest.

TWO DAYS

In memory of Margaret Fuller Ossoli. Born May 23, 1810. Drowned off the coast of Long Island, July 19, 1850.

Read before the members of the Ossoli Circle of Knoxville, Tennessee, on the anniversary of Margaret Fuller's birth.*

MAY's lingering apple blooms had blown
Almost into June's rose-wreathed bowers;
Along the graveled dooryard paths
The locusts dropped their snowy flowers;
Swinging amid the branches high,
Their tuneful songs the robins trilled,
Fraught with such joyous ecstasy
That all the air with gladness thrilled;
While from far meadows, daisy-starred,
Blithe bobolinks piped back reply,
Drowning the bee's remonstrant hum
In drowsy circles wheeling by
From rosy-crested clover seas
That surged beside the winding lanes

* The barque *Elizabeth*, in which Margaret Fuller Ossoli took passage from Florence to New York, was wrecked on Fire Island off the coast of Long Island. The fate of the vessel was precipitated and sealed by the breaking through the hold of the heavy marble of Power's "Greek Slave," which the *Elizabeth* was transporting to America. One of the pathetic incidents related by the sole female survivor of the wreck is that Madame Ossoli, as brave in death as in life, quieted the frenzied shrieks of her frightened child by singing it to sleep cradled upon her bosom.

Whose elm tree arches echoed back
  The happy blackbird's sweet refrains.
So, with the breath of violets, borne
  On soft south winds, and rapturous lay
Of glad birds, singing as they soared,
  Was ushered in the fair spring day
When opened first to earthly light
  Those dark gray eyes, whose radiant rays
In after years a beacon fire
Kindled on Learning's rugged height,
  Burning with pure and steadfast glow
To guide to higher planes of thought
  The trembling sister feet that long
Through darksome paths the goal had sought.

O vanguard soul, that dared to brave
  The sneer of scorn, the smile of doubt,
Still burns on that far height you gained
  That vestal flame. Its rays stream out
Into these later years, and flash
  A message to us from the past
Of brave endeavors, high resolves
  Crowned with a victor's bays at last.

O eyes ablaze with genius' fire,
  How deeply tender did you grow
When bending o'er the couch of pain
  Where Tiber's turbid torrents flow
Down to Italia's sun-kissed sea,
  Till 'neath their lids with warm tears wet

The purple shadow seemed to lie
Of your New England violet.
O voice that thrilled with Learning's zeal,
To such sweet cadences you fell,
Your tuneful robin's liquid notes
Seemed in their silver depths to dwell,
As breathing words of hope and trust,
They blended with the latest sigh
Of those brave patriot sons who died
For Italy and Liberty.

. . . . . .

From sullen seas a July sun
Rose o'er Long Island's sand-barred shore;
No songbird's notes rang sweet and clear,
Only the breaker's long, dull roar,
And wind's wild wail sounded above
The cry of sea-mews hurrying by —
A wavering, swift, sharp line of white,
Cleaving a black and angry sky.
No clover billows rose and fell;
For bloom there shone the white foam wreath
That gnawed the doomed ship's wounded side
As some grim monster's cruel teeth
Widen the wounds its fangs have made
In the poor victim's quivering form.
The voices of Despair and Death
Shrieked in the fury of the storm.
Still 'mid the crash of shivering spars

That sweet voice softly lulled to rest,
  The little babe that sunk to sleep,
Pillowed upon its mother's breast.
  Loudly the hungry, clamoring waves
Called for their prey, but still unmoved
  Those gray eyes shone, did they not hold
Within their gaze their best beloved,
  Husband and child? Did they not see
Beyond the bar a heavenly shore
  Whose beckoning palm trees promised rest
From grief and pain forevermore?

. . . . . .

Two days — one rose with sunshine crowned,
  But bore the soul that woke to life
'Mid breath of flowers and song of birds,
  Into a world of pain and strife;
And one that dawned 'mid tempest-clouds
  Carried on its tumultuous tide
The tired soul to that fair land
  Where bloom the living streams beside,
The lilies of eternal peace;
  And angel voices, soft and clear,
Ring sweeter far than sweetest song
  That ever greeted mortal ear.

O heart that suffered, soul that dared,
  And in the suffering, daring, won —
Unblinded by the dazzling light —
  Your eagle aim to reach the sun,

Be graven in our hearts to-day
  The ennobling lesson of your life:
A scorn of base, ignoble aims,
  Of cankering envy, and the strife
Of petty souls who seek to build
  Upon another's loss their gain;
An earnest seeking after truth
  Unsullied by doubt's marring stain;
Brave strivings towards a high ideal
  Until we reach that purer air
You breathed, and prove ourselves to be
  Worthy the honored name we bear!

THE MOTHER TOUCH

Bloom of the violet, breath of the rose,
  Beam of the moon on a summer sea,
Strain of a long-forgotten song,
  Beauty and fragrance and melody.
Memory's handmaidens, oh, to-night,
  Bring some balm from the long ago
For a bruisèd heart, till a healing flood
  From my tearless eyelids at last shall flow.

Oh, violet, blue as the laughing eyes
  That looked into mine in the morning glow
Of life, like pastures of Paradise,
  Are the April meadows you lead us through,
Two happy children, weaving together
  Your scented blooms in the fair spring
    weather.

And red, red rose, your breath of musk
  Folds me close in the fond embrace
Of the friend of my youth, as through the dusk
  The path of your sweetness we idly trace;
And moon, that silvers yon summer sea,
  Down your pathway of light once more I float,
And a tender voice breathes low in my ear,
  While Love plies the oars of the fairy boat.

But playmate, and friend, and lover, in vain
Beckon from out the misty past.
Tearless I gaze on the shadowy train,
Ghosts of a youth too bright to last.

But a tremulous tune comes floating down
Through the night, by some wandering wind
beguiled,
And the long-pent grief of a breaking heart
Bursts forth in tears when I hear the wild,
Sweet, quavering air my mother sang
As she rocked me to sleep, a sinless child.

AND YET —

A SEPTEMBER MEMORY

Oh, do you not remember
In that golden-hued September
  Long ago,
How we sat beneath the shadow
Of the gnarled oak in the meadow,
With the young moon rising o'er us,
And the river close before us
Murmuring a tender chorus
  Minor-keyed and low?
In the soft September moonlight,
Shining clear as winter noonlight,
  Vale and stream
And the far-off hills eternal
Glowed with that light supernal
  Seen only in Love's dream.
The subtle south-wind's moaning
And the waves' low undertoning
  To us brought
Of the future no sad presage —
Only with Love's heavenly message
  Breeze and stream seemed fraught.

. . . . . .

Still the restless river rushes,
With its fitful sobs and hushes,
  Through the reeds along the shore;
And the young moon, fair and tender,
Showers forth the same soft splendor.

But where, across the meadow,
Falls the old oak's shifting shadow
  You and I will nevermore
Sit hand in hand together
In the fair September weather,
  Heart to heart,
Breathing each the same sweet story;
For the love that lent the glory
To valley, hill, and river,
Lies cold and still forever,
  Slain by the cruel dart
Of a fickle woman's scorning.
Vain is memory's fond endeavor,
The wildest pleading never
  Can wring its lips apart.

And yet — as I remember
That long-past sweet September,
From the ashes of Love's ember
  Arises once again,
To mock me in my sadness,
The ghost of that dead madness
With its thrill of youthful gladness
  And its passionate, sweet pain,
Till my heart would give its measure
Of all future joy and pleasure
  Once more the bliss to know
Of those hours beneath the shadow
Of the old oak in the meadow,

With the young moon rising o'er us
And the river close before us,
Murmuring a fitful chorus,
Minor-keyed and low.

THE HAUNTED LAKE OF ELLERSLIE

A RIVEN pine tree guards its shores,
And sullen and silent its waters lie,
But at night the traveler passing by
Hears the plash of dipping oars,
Though never oarsman or boat can he see,
Rippling the waters of Ellerslie
As they darkly gleam at the midnight hour
In the gruesome shade of the old church tower.

When the moon's pale beams no longer shine
'Midst the murky clouds, the boding cry
Of an owl is heard in the branches high
Of the lonely, lightning-riven pine,
Till the belfry-bat in its circling flight
Pauses, then veers in wild affright
Back to its home 'neath the rotting stair
That leads to the crumbling belfry, where
No foot has trodden for many a year;
And the traveler trembles in deadly fear
When he hears the bell in the dark tower toll
A knell as if speeding a passing soul,
And with palsied limbs he strives to flee
From the ghostly presence he cannot see
That haunts the dark lake of Ellerslie.

And he thinks in his fear of the eerie tale
Told by old dames in a dim firelight:
How long years since on a Michaelmas night,
Proud Lady Ellen of far Kirkedale

Stole from her home with mind distraught,
Crazed by a love she had given unsought —
Given unsought, and all in vain,
For the lord of Ellerslie's wide domain.
Over moorland and fen, through blinding brake,
She fled, 'till she reached the dismal lake
That gleamed in a dying moon's pale light
Like a baleful jewel on Ellerslie's height.
She unfastened the skiff that for many a day
  Had lain at the foot of the riven tree
  That guards those waters of mystery,
And over their surface pursued her way,
With short, swift strokes that echoed wide
And far o'er the lonely country side.
With frenzied fingers the oars she plied
Till she moored her boat at the midnight hour
'Neath the ghostly shade of the old church-
      tower
That leans over Ellerslie's fathomless tide.

Up, up the winding stair she sped,
  And as on the moldering wood she stepped,
  From beneath her tread there slowly crept,
Then in swift dismay from her presence fled,
The noisome things that hide alway
Where ruins crumble in slow decay.
From the riven pine, in its branches high,
An owl sent forth a boding cry;
In her face, the tattered ivy that clung
To the broken walls, its fingers flung;

The lizard looked out from its leafy lair;
And a bat flew forth from the creaking stair,
To tangle itself in her silken hair.

Yet all undaunted and unafraid,
Still upward sped the witless maid
Till she came where the bell rope dangling hung.
Then over the sleeping valley she flung
An echoing peal from the deep-toned bell,
Crying, "List! I am ringing my funeral knell!"
She climbed to the tottering parapet,
Her raven locks with the night dews wet,
Then sprang to the beckoning waves below;
And only the water-kelpies know
How many fathoms low she sleeps,
All unshriven in Ellerslie's deeps.

And when the circling year rolls round
  And in its train comes Michaelmas night,
  And the far moon faints on Ellerslie's height,
To the valley below is borne the sound
Of swift oar-strokes on the haunted lake,
Till the cottagers, startled from dreams, awake,
And shudder and shiver and swiftly make
The sign of the cross as they whisper, "Hark!
Lady Ellen is rowing her ghostly bark
Over Ellerslie's waters, deep and dark."
And when they hear, at the midnight hour,
The distant bell in the dark church tower

A funeral knell in deep notes toll,
" God rest Lady Ellen's unshriven soul,"
In awe-hushed tones they softly say:
" And pity and save, dear Lord," they pray,
" All those who wander this Michaelmas night
Alone on Ellerslie's distant height."

AT EVENTIDE

AN APPRECIATION

It seems but yesternoon, dear Heart, though 'tis
long, long years ago,
That together we watched from the mountain-
top the clouds in the valley below
Like phantom-ships with shadowy sails, drift
idly to and fro.

'Twas a weary path we had traversed to reach
that sun-crowned, wind-swept height,
But your foot never faltered, and ever your eye
beamed with the fearless light
That dwells in the eagle's piercing glance as
sunward he wings his flight.

O'er dark abysm, by beetling crag, the rugged
road oft led,
Yet blithely still, with song and smile, clasping
my hand, you sped
Ever upward and onward, and when dark clouds
the summer heavens o'erspread,

Your cheerful glance could still discern, glim-
mering softly through
A narrow rift in the threatening clouds, a slen-
der strip of blue,
That a promise held of fairer skies in its tender
azure hue.

When, turning backward, I longingly gazed on
the meadows fair and low,
Where we first joined hands for the onward
march in the morning's sunny glow,
You said, " Grieve not, there are fairer fields
where balmier breezes blow,

" In daisied vales on the other side of the moun-
tain's purple crest.
There, sweet are the airs as those that blow from
' Araby the blest.'
And tender and soft is the note, at eve, of the
fond dove in her nest."

So slowly, carefully down we passed o'er the
winding mountain trail,
As one by one each threatening cloud close
furled its silver sail.
And ere we knew, our wandering feet had
reached this sheltered vale,

Where, dim as the sound of a distant bell, comes
faintly to our ears
The fret of the busy world, and through the
mists of sorrowful years,
The joys that brightened the dark hours shine
like a rainbow seen through tears.

Should we grieve because they have slipped from
our grasp, the violets pure and sweet
That we treasured at morn; or the roses rare,
plucked in the noonday heat,
When the healing herbs of Autumn shed their
fragrance about our feet?

And should we mourn that the rainbow lights of
morn in our eyes have died,
Or sigh for the noontide's radiant rays, when we
wander side by side
In the peaceful calm and the golden glow of the
Autumn eventide?

Oh, the years have come and the years have gone,
with many a smile and tear,
But if dark or bright the devious path, ever
your heart of cheer
Hath brightened our joys and lightened our
griefs and bravely smiled away fear.

And I lift my eyes in praise and thanks to a
loving Father in heaven
For his precious gift of the hopeful heart that
its sunshine freely has given
Alike in the morning's sunny glow and the gath-
ering shades of even.

Outlined against the ebon clouds
In sinuous lines of shimmering white,
The far-off, snow-clad mountains send
Their greeting to the solemn night.
Their pallid lips take up the notes
That through the sleeping valley swell,
And murmur to the starless sky
The requiem that the midnight bell
Tolls for the dead year.
To and fro
Across the snow,
Deep-toned and slow,
The mournful measures ebb and flow.

But unseen fingers rend apart
The pall of clouds, and through the rifts,
With the sweet look of one who smiles
'Midst pain, the moon her wan face lifts,
And faintly silvers each cold height;
With quicker strokes the midnight bell
Peals forth in tones of wild delight,
And dim peaks brighten
As they hear
Ring far and near,
Swift, sweet and clear,
The promise of the new-born year.

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